

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the present application:

Listing of Claims:

1. – 122. (Canceled)

123. (New) A method of implanting a spinal stabilization system comprising:

- forming an incision at a desired site through skin of a patient;
- anchoring a bone fastener assembly to a vertebral body at a target location;
- disposing a sleeve between the incision and the bone fastener assembly, the sleeve having a proximal end region and a distal end region with a passage defined therebetween, the sleeve defining a channel in communication with the passage along at least portion of a length of the sleeve, the distal end region being disposed proximate the bone fastener assembly and the proximal end region being disposed proximate the incision;
- inserting an elongate member through the incision and along the passage to a position adjacent the bone fastener assembly; and
- securing the elongate member to the bone fastener assembly.

124. (New) The method of claim 123, wherein anchoring the bone fastener assembly includes advancing the bone fastener assembly through the incision to the target location.

125. (New) The method of claim 124, wherein the sleeve is detachably coupled to the bone fastener assembly prior to advancing the bone fastener assembly through the incision.

126. (New) The method of claim 123, wherein the elongate member is inserted substantially longitudinally through the incision.

127. (New) The method of claim 126, wherein the elongate member is angled in a first orientation relative to the skin prior to inserting through the incision and rotated to a second orientation subcutaneously.

128. (New) The method of claim 123, wherein during inserting, at least a portion of the elongate member extends outwardly from the sleeve through the channel.

129. (New) The method of claim 123, wherein the bone fastener assembly has a slot defined therein to receive the elongate member, and further wherein the channel of the sleeve is defined at least in the distal end region of the sleeve; the channel being aligned with the slot while the elongate member is inserted to the position adjacent the bone fastener assembly.

130. (New) The method of claim 129, wherein the bone fastener assembly includes a collar comprising a body and at least two arms extending therefrom, the slot being defined between the arms.

131. (New) The method of claim 123, wherein the elongate member is secured to the bone fastener assembly by engaging at least one closure member to the bone fastener assembly.

132. (New) The method of claim 131, wherein the at least one closure member is delivered along the passage of the sleeve to the bone fastener assembly.

133. (New) The method of claim 123, wherein the channel is defined along a majority of the length of the sleeve.

134. (New) The method of claim 123, wherein the sleeve includes a sleeve wall, the sleeve wall defining at least a portion of the channel.

135. (New) The method of claim 123, wherein inserting comprises grasping the elongate member with a positioning tool.

136. (New) The method of claim 123, further comprising:
anchoring a second bone fastener assembly to a second target location;
positioning the elongate member with a first end portion of the elongate member adjacent the first bone fastener assembly and a second end portion of the elongate member adjacent the second bone fastener assembly; and further wherein securing the elongate member includes securing the first end portion of the elongate member to the first bone fastener assembly and the second end portion of the elongate member to the second bone fastener assembly.

137. (New) The method of claim 136, further comprising:
forming a dilated tissue plane between the first target location and the second target location.

138. (New) The method of claim 137, wherein forming the dilated tissue plane includes moving a tissue wedge from the first sleeve toward the second target location.

139. (New) The method of claim 136, further comprising:
detachably coupling a second sleeve to the second bone fastener assembly,
the second sleeve having a proximal end region and a distal end region with a passage
defined therebetween, the second sleeve defining a channel in communication with the
passage along at least a length of the second sleeve.

140. (New) The method of claim 139, wherein the channel of the
second sleeve is aligned facing the channel of the first sleeve; and further wherein during
positioning of the elongate member, the second end portion of the elongate member is
received within the channel of the second sleeve.

141. (New) The method of claim 139, further comprising coupling the
proximal end region of the second sleeve to the proximal end region of the first sleeve.

142. (New) The method of claim 139, further comprising disposing the
second sleeve between the incision and the second bone fastener assembly with the distal
end region of the second sleeve being disposed proximate the second bone fastener
assembly and the proximal end region of the second sleeve being disposed proximate the
incision.

143. (New) The method of claim 142, wherein at least one of the
channel of the first sleeve and the channel of the second sleeve extends substantially the
entire length thereof, and further wherein, during inserting of the elongate member, the
first end portion of the elongate member is received in the channel of the first sleeve and
the second end portion of the elongate member is received in the channel of the second
sleeve.

144. (New) The method of claim 139, further comprising estimating the
distance between the first sleeve and the second sleeve.

145. (New) The method of claim 144, further comprising selecting a length of the elongate member corresponding to the estimated distance.

146. (New) The method of claim 136, further comprising:
anchoring a third bone fastener assembly to a third target location between the first target location and the second target location; and further wherein positioning the elongate member includes positioning an intermediate portion of the elongate member adjacent the third bone fastener assembly, and securing the elongate member includes securing the intermediate portion of the elongate member to the third bone fastener assembly.

147. (New) The method of claim 146, further comprising:
detachably coupling an intermediate sleeve to the third bone fastener assembly, the intermediate sleeve having a proximal end region and a distal end region with a passage defined therebetween, the intermediate sleeve defining opposing channels in communication with the passage along at least a length of the intermediate sleeve; and further wherein during positioning of the elongate member, the elongate member extends through the opposing channels of the intermediate sleeve.

148. (New) The method of claim 123, further comprising sequentially dilating a working space between the incision and the target location prior to anchoring the bone fastener assembly.

149. (New) A method of implanting a spinal stabilization system comprising:
forming an incision at a desired site through skin of a patient;

anchoring a first bone fastener assembly to a first vertebral body at a first target location, and anchoring a second bone fastener assembly to a second target location;

disposing a first sleeve between the incision and the first bone fastener assembly, the first sleeve having a proximal end region and a distal end region with a passage defined therebetween, the first sleeve defining a channel in communication with the passage along at least portion of a length of the first sleeve, the distal end region being disposed proximate the first bone fastener assembly and the proximal end region being disposed proximate the incision;

inserting an elongate member through the incision and along the passage to a position adjacent the first bone fastener assembly and the second bone fastener assembly; and

securing a first end portion of the elongate member to the first bone fastener assembly and a second end portion of the elongate member to the second bone fastener assembly.

150. (New) The method of claim 149, further comprising disposing a second sleeve between the incision and the second bone fastener assembly, the second sleeve having a proximal end region and a distal end region with a passage defined therebetween, the second sleeve defining a channel in communication with the passage along at least portion of a length of the second sleeve, the distal end region being disposed proximate the second bone fastener assembly and the proximal end region being disposed proximate the incision;

wherein inserting the elongate member is by guiding the first end portion of the elongate member along the channel of the first sleeve and guiding the second end portion of the elongate member along the channel of the second sleeve.